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General and complete disarmament

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. On 2 December 2011, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/32, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation". In paragraph 8 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the issue of the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and to submit a report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 13 February 2012, a note verbale was sent to Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are reproduced in section II below. Additional replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[5 June 2012]

The complex international situation and the need for a collective response to the pressing problems besetting humanity confirm the importance of multilateralism as the most viable option for addressing the new threats in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. It confirms the relevance of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on this topic.

The disarmament and arms control agreements, negotiated and implemented in a truly multilateral, effective and non-discriminatory framework, provide an appropriate mechanism for States parties to consult one another and work together to solve any problem that may arise with regard to their objectives or the implementation of the provisions of those agreements.

The stalemate stemming from the lack of political will on the part of certain actors that has persisted for several years in the negotiations on the multilateral disarmament machinery increase the value of multilateralism.

The unilateral actions in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control undertaken by some countries to promote the negotiation of multilateral international instruments outside the framework of the United Nations are a cause for concern, as they erode confidence in the international system, the foundations of the United Nations itself and the credibility of multilateral agreements on disarmament.

Only by seeking negotiated solutions in a multilateral framework, and acknowledging the need to arrive at collective agreements, can international peace and security be safeguarded.

The goals of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot be achieved through unilateral measures, the development of strategic alliances to promote agreements negotiated outside internationally recognized multilateral frameworks, or by the use or threat of use of force. Multilateralism and peaceful solutions negotiated through the organs established for

such purposes and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations are the appropriate channels.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, as the Organization's most representative and democratic body, must play the central role in efforts to strengthen the multilateral route. Cuba reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, preservation and strengthening of multilateralism and the multilateral decision-making process.

Norway

[Original: English]
[1 June 2012]

The Conference on Disarmament is proclaimed to be the sole multilateral negotiating body. Norway would question this idea. Any credible and relevant multilateral disarmament negotiating body should be open to all countries, and especially members of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Currently, only 65 countries are members of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has virtually no interaction with civil society. As a principle, all stakeholders should be included in disarmament processes, including relevant non-governmental organizations. The working methods of the Conference are in dire need of reform. It is not acceptable that the consensus principle is applied in ways that allow countries to single-handedly bring work to a standstill. All these factors have led the Conference on Disarmament to its present dysfunctional state, where it has not been able to deliver anything of substance in a decade and a half and appears increasingly marginalized and irrelevant.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission, established for the purpose of conducting substantive deliberations and making recommendations, has not been able to deliver anything for over a decade. If the Disarmament Commission is to be preserved at all, it has to be made more practical, more focused and more relevant. We continue to believe that regular sessions of the Disarmament Commission should be much shorter and focus on one or two topics, decided on by the First Committee of the General Assembly.

We should also look at ways to improve the working methods of the First Committee, which should play a crucial role in advancing the work on disarmament and non-proliferation. This is all the more important as other parts of the machinery have come to a grinding halt. Norway has for years questioned whether the great efforts mobilized to secure the highest number of co-sponsors to resolutions is the best way to make use of our time and energy. If we could agree on limiting the practice of seeking co-sponsorship to only newly introduced resolutions, we would improve the efficiency of the First Committee. It is also Norway's view that an adopted resolution stands unless otherwise decided. Such an understanding could help bring the number of repetitive resolutions down, make more time available for substantive and focused discussions and make the First Committee more able to reflect new political opportunities to move the disarmament agenda forward.

Norway fully subscribes to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. There have long been calls for negotiations on a legally binding convention, in line with the provisions of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Norway acknowledges

the need — and obligation — to negotiate such an instrument, in good faith and in accordance with the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in 1996. However, Norway has questioned the call by many States for the negotiation of such an instrument to be conducted in the Conference on Disarmament. As an alternative, Norway would recommend looking at ways to utilize the General Assembly to ensure progress. This would indicate a clear alternative to the current status quo.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[23 May 2012]

In this context, we believe that, through the vehicle of multilateralism, States have the opportunity to work towards and make their contribution to addressing serious challenges of the present day, including, among others, international organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and illicit trafficking in firearms.

Panama is a signatory to international instruments that encourage and promote multilateralism in the endeavour to achieve disarmament and the non-proliferation of firearms.

We recommend further work on the development of multilateral agreements that are truly effective and attain the established goals relating to disarmament and non-proliferation.

Qatar

[Original: English]
[11 April 2012]

The State of Qatar supports and encourages multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation, as it is among the factors that enhance the credibility of this principle, the sharing of responsibility and the seriousness of the intentional commitments in this regard.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[26 March 2012]

The twenty-first century has changed both the concept and the collective perception of international security. The confluence of new actors, challenges and threats that exacerbate the uncertainty and complexity of our times has placed security among the priorities of the international community.

The European Security Strategy identifies five major threats: the proliferation of weapons, especially those of mass destruction; terrorism; failed States; regional conflicts; and organized crime. It is needless to emphasize the effect of conventional arms and their role in feeding crises and violence.

The recently approved Spanish Security Strategy identifies the following threats and risks: armed conflicts; terrorism; organized crime; economic and financial insecurity; energy vulnerability; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; cyberthreats; uncontrolled migration flows; and emergencies and disasters. Among all these, where the present report is concerned, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction stands out as one of the greatest threats of our era, especially if rogue actors, such as terrorist organizations, succeed in obtaining and using them.

Spain's National Defence Directive No. 1/2008 states that the current strategic scenario is characterized by complexity, uncertainty and potential hazards. Terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the most serious transnational threats facing our society.

According to National Defence Directive No. 1/2008, failed, weak or disintegrating States, as well as regional conflicts, give rise to serious crises that have repercussions in other States and maritime areas. The struggle for access to basic resources, together with the effects of climate change, are emerging as major sources of conflict in the years to come. In addition, cyberspace is a new dimension in the realm of security and defence.

These emerging realities require multilateral responses, political commitment and consultation if international peace and stability are to be enhanced substantively.

In a globalized and interdependent world, security is a value and aspiration of States, institutions, regions, communities and, above all, of citizens. Insecurity in our times originates not only from aggressor States, but also from non-State actors, terrorists and other criminal organizations. The deterioration of security hampers the development of peoples and nations, because violence denies the right of all people to progress; the advancement of human rights and democratic values is essential for the exercise of liberty.

One of the main problems connected with proliferation is the existence of multiple treaties, agreements, initiatives and control regimes, and the need to coordinate their implementation and criteria, not always an easy task. Although in principle these are all supported by like-minded countries, and the international community is increasingly espousing the goal of combating proliferation, the fact that not all States are included in all of them creates problems that are sometimes difficult to resolve. Nevertheless, advances and attitudinal changes have taken place that allow us some measure of optimism in that regard.

These reflections lead us to the questions of how to address these challenges, and the necessary and most effective ways of doing so. No doubt, what is needed is a multidisciplinary strategy that encompasses intergovernmental cooperation, the development of joint monitoring, verification and follow-up mechanisms, information exchange, and the establishment of new controls or the updating of earlier ones. Their scope involves national defence systems, the strengthening of multilateral instruments and organizations, cooperation in development, and the eradication of illicit trafficking, as well as other aspects.

We must provide effective solutions for combating international security risks. The most appropriate approach is political and diplomatic agreement, which must be reflected in legally binding conventions on disarmament and arms control.

Spain is committed to the multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament system; it has signed all the international agreements constituting the legal and normative framework of that system, and maintains an active, ambitious and consistent policy in support of its effectiveness and with the clear objective of achieving the universality of the major treaties in this area.

In order to ensure that a disarmament and non-proliferation system functions effectively, it must be truly multilateral in nature and based on full compliance by States with their obligations. This multilateral approach, in addition to increasing the system's effectiveness, gives it important legitimacy.

This is why, as part of its general action strategy, National Defence Directive No. 1/2008 states that defence policy shall rely, among other factors, on "Spain's commitment to defend international peace and security with regard to international legality and the exercise of multilateralism as a vehicle for concerted action in international relations and for conflict resolution".

In order to remain credible, the effectiveness of the international system needs to be improved. This will require more cohesive instruments, greater political commitment and more legally binding agreements. Regulations must require compliance with the obligations undertaken by States and foster the promotion of rigorous and transparent verification systems that are accepted by all States. The capacity for consensus also needs to be broadened so as to establish legal frameworks conducive to the effective advancement of peace, security, cooperation and global progress. In this regard, it is vital to agree on an agenda for the Conference on Disarmament with a view to reactivating this important multilateral forum on disarmament and non-proliferation.

As both a global and a European actor, Spain is firmly committed to the reforms of multilateralism, which necessitates a greater engagement in the renewal of our international relations and the mechanisms and institutions thereof.

A responsible non-proliferation and disarmament policy requires the promotion of an effective multilateral system. To that end it will be necessary:

- To seek comprehensive political solutions that prevent, deter or stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or conventional weapons;
- To integrate policy on non-proliferation and disarmament into general security policy;
- To consider the possibility of including non-proliferation clauses in bilateral and regional relations;
- To promote the universality, defence and strengthening of international treaties, conventions, agreements and regimes;
- To strengthen the role of the United Nations Security Council;
- To promote the national implementation of international obligations;
- To improve the effectiveness of verification mechanisms through political, economic and technical support;
- To strengthen import and export control systems relating to defence and dual-use materials;

To promote international information exchange;

To strengthen technical assistance among States and cooperation for development;

To promote legal and responsible trade in defence materials and dual-use technologies, and prevent illicit trafficking;

To facilitate collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organizations and industries that share the same objective.

Only an effective multilateral system can successfully tackle the threat to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in combination with other phenomena such as international terrorism, transnational organized crime, failed States and regional conflicts.

Turkmenistan

[Original: Russian]
[14 May 2012]

At its sixty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/32, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and nonproliferation", which recalls General Assembly resolution 56/24 T of 29 November 2001 on multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism. The resolution was adopted on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations with the aim of maintaining international peace and security; taking effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace; and ensuring by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law the arbitration or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to breaches of the peace.

Pursuant to this resolution the United Nations Disarmament Commission carries out necessary and useful work to develop confidence-building measures and ensure transparency in the area of conventional weapons, underscoring the importance of multilateralism in addressing these matters. The United Nations Disarmament Commission is one of the most appropriate platforms for international efforts to step up multilateral disarmament diplomacy, to strengthen existing international non-proliferation and arms control mechanisms, and to establish new such mechanisms. In 1998, the post of Special Coordinator on Transparency was created. Transparency in armaments helps strengthen mutual confidence, prevent destabilizing supplies of arms and create an atmosphere conducive to comprehensive disarmament.

By a resolution adopted on 12 December 1995, the General Assembly recognized the permanent neutral status of Turkmenistan. On that basis, the Constitutional Act on the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan was issued on 27 December 1995. The permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan proclaimed by this Act is the foundation of its domestic and foreign policy, which is designed to strengthen stability and social harmony and to develop friendly and mutually beneficial relations with States in the region and around the world.

Turkmenistan is underpinned by its peace-loving foreign policy, which is a direct consequence of its neutral status and international commitments. Accordingly, all matters are addressed exclusively through political and diplomatic channels, primarily the United Nations and other authoritative international organizations. The foreign policy of Turkmenistan, which aims to develop ties with other States and international bodies and to resolve matters conducive to the establishment of a benign and forward-looking world order, has played a constructive role in ensuring regional peace and security, a priority issue for the international community.

Turkmenistan has ratified a number of international conventions and agreements for the implementation of its disarmament obligations: the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings; the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition; and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Turkmenistan is not involved in the manufacture of arms and no arms of any kind are transported through its State territory. Accordingly, Turkmenistan is fulfilling its disarmament and non-proliferation obligations, meeting its commitment to prevent threats to international peace and security, and supporting joint disarmament and non-proliferation efforts by the international community as a whole.